

EXHIBIT 2

Justice for 9/11 Victims' Families

In November, Congress adopted and the President signed, the Continuing Resolution, Public Law 116-69, to keep our government open and operating as we finalized the 2020 budget. The CR, as it is referred to, also extended authorities for critical services such as the National Flood Insurance Program, Community Health Centers, the National Health Service Corps—and it removed a deadline so that New Jersey could keep over \$400 million in federal funds for important roadway and transit projects.

Of particular significance to thousands of 9/11 victims' surviving family members—many of whom live in New Jersey and in the Fourth Congressional District—this CR also reformed the US Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism (USVSST) Fund to ensure that immediate family members—the spouses and children of the victims of 9/11—are, for the first time, given rightful access to the judgements they have won in court against the perpetrators of the attack on our Nation. It's a giant step forward for justice.

The USVSST was established by Congress in December 2015 to compensate victims of international state-sponsored terrorism. It is funded entirely by criminal and civil penalties collected by the US government from foreign entities that violate US sanctions—primarily related to Iran. In addition to compensating Americans who were held hostage during the Iranian Hostage Crisis of 1979–1981, the 2015 legislation also sought to award any persons who have won legal judgements in a US federal district court against a state sponsor of terrorism arising from acts of international terrorism.

Is there any more deserving group of victims of state sponsored acts of terrorism than those who lost their parents or spouses on September 11, 2001? I don't think so.

Yet, remarkably through a misinterpretation of the 2015 law by the fund's Special Master, the immediate family members—i.e. the dependents—were barred from participating. That's unfair, unjust and unconscionable.

In 2017 and 2019, the fund granted awards to the Iranian hostages, their relatives, victims of US embassy bombings and the Marine barracks in Lebanon—and



Congressman Chris Smith hosted a town meeting with families of the victims of 9/11 in Monmouth County in September. Due to a misinterpretation of the law, children and widows of 9/11 victims were barred from pursuing judgements they had won in federal court against terrorists through the US Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund. In November, Smith hosted additional meetings in Washington and was part of a successful effort to open the program to the 9/11 victim's surviving family members who are the most deserving of claims made against state sponsors of terrorism.

to more distant relatives of those who were killed on 9/11. But the spouses and children of 9/11 victims were denied, barred and shown the door.

With the deadline for the 2020 round of awards approaching, this past September I hosted a town meeting in Wall Township, NJ. Widely attended by 9/11 victims' surviving family members from across the entire tri-state area, the meeting exposed anew the struggles these surviving family members continue to face, the sacrifices they have endured, the efforts they have made to hold state sponsors of terrorism accountable for the deaths of their loved ones, and the madness in the decision to bar them from the USVSST.

The technical correction in the CR reflects a bipartisan agreement, an equitable fix to the USVSST that permits 9/11 spouses and children to pursue their judgements in the fund while continuing the participation of the other 9/11 relatives—and victims and relatives from other attacks—who are already eligible for the fund.

Over the years I have worked tire-

lessly with 9/11 victims' surviving family members to improve the Victims' Compensation Fund; establish the 9/11 Commission, and; implement national security reforms, including the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security. We have also secured compensation for those who have become gravely ill because of exposure to toxins at Ground Zero (including Public Law 116-152) and the passage of the *Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act* (JASTA: Public Law 114-222) to enable 9/11 victims' surviving family members to legally pursue the terrorists without being blocked by a foreign sovereign immunity clause.

None of this would have been possible if not for the leadership and commitment of the victims' spouses and children, people who continue to seek justice after the murders of their loved ones. It is an honor to work with and for them.

With absolute clarity, we have now instructed the Justice Department to specifically honor the judgements of these immediate 9/11 family members.